

Amouzad, Esmaeili among UWW's top-ranked wrestlers in 2025



Iran's Rahman Amouzad (L) and Saeid Esmaeili are pictured during their gold-winning campaigns at the 2025 Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in November.
● IAWFIR

Sports Desk

Iran's Rahman Amouzad and Saeid Esmaeili led their respective weight classes as the United World Wrestling announced its top-ranked wrestlers for 2025 across all 30 men's and women's categories.

Ranking points were calculated based on wrestlers' results at the 2025 World Championships, continental championships, and the four Ranking Series events.

Amouzad topped the freestyle 65kg division, while Esmaeili ranked No. 1 in the Greco-Roman 67kg.

Amouzad, 23, enjoyed a glorious two-month period by collecting back-to-back gold medals at the World Championships and the Islamic Solidarity Games. Avenging his final loss at the Paris Olympics against Kotaro Kiyooka, Amouzad secured a superiority victory over the Japanese wrestler in the first period of the 65kg showdown in Zagreb in September to claim his second world title in three editions.

Picking up where he left off, the Ruthless Rahman then cruised to the final at November's Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh without conceding a single point, before demolishing Tajikistan's Abdulmazhid Kudiev (12-2) to claim his second major gold of the international season.

Reigning Olympic champion Esmaeili, meanwhile, began the international season with a gold-winning campaign at March's Asian Championships in Amman, and then marked his World Championships debut in style by edging Azerbaijan's Hasrat Jafarov 1-0 in the final. The pair met again for gold in Riyadh two months later, where the 22-year-old Iranian came within two seconds of

suffering only the second defeat of his senior international career – and his first since June 2024 – before producing a trademark four-pointer to defeat Jafarov 8-3 in a thrilling showpiece.

Both Amouzad and Esmaeili are on the 10-man shortlist – alongside fellow Iranians Amirhossein Zare', Mohammad-Hadi Saravi, and Gholamreza Farrokhi – for the UWW Most Dominant Wrestler of the Year.

Meanwhile, the United States featured three reigning world champions in Zahid Valencia (86kg), Trent Hiday (92kg), and Kyle Snyder (97kg) as the top-ranked wrestlers in the freestyle division. Bahrain also had top-ranked wrestlers, with Khidir Saipudinov and Shamil Sharipov finishing atop the 79kg and 125kg rankings, respectively.

North Korean world champion Chong-song Han (57kg), Russian sensation Zavur Uguev, who won the world 61kg title as a neutral participant, Japan's Yoshinosuke Aoyag (70kg), and Slovakia's Tajmuraz Salkazanov (79kg) complete the freestyle list.

In Greco-Roman, Uzbekistan emerged as the most successful country with three top-ranked wrestlers: world champion Aytjan Khalmakhanov (63kg) at the weight, Alisher Ganiev (60kg), and Abdullo Aliev (72kg).

Georgia and Hungary had two wrestlers each at the top. World champion Vakhtang Lolua earned himself the top rank at 55kg, while his Georgian compatriot Gela Bolkvadze topped the 82kg. Hungary's Alex Szoke and Darius Vitek placed atop the 97kg and 130kg divisions, respectively.

Türkiye's Ahmed Yilmaz (72kg) and Serbian world gold medalist Aleksandr Komarov (87kg) are also in the 10-man Greco-Roman list.

Sports Desk

Iranian rower Bahman Nasiri has set his sights on gold at the Aichi-Nagoya 2026 Asian Games after rejoining the Iranian national rowing team.

The 28-year-old, who won the Asian gold in the men's single sculls in 2019, recently returned to the national setup after representing Azerbaijan at various international competitions over the past three years.

Nasiri switched nationality after being excluded from Iran's delegation to the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, held in 2021, despite having secured a quota place for the Games. Under International Olympic Committee regulations, Iran was allocated a single rowing berth in Tokyo, which ultimately went to Nazanin Malaee, a six-time Asian champion.

Nasiri said the appointment of Mohsen Shadi as president of the Iranian Rowing Federation played a decisive role in his decision to return.

"Mr. Shadi and I were teammates and competed together in several

Asian tournaments. When he contacted me for a meeting after his appointment, I was encouraged by his proposal," Nasiri told Mehr News Agency.

He also welcomed the appointment of Ahmad Donyamali as Iran's Minister of Sports. "I was pleased to see Mr. Donyamali take office, as he played a key role in introducing rowing to Iran," he said.

Reflecting on his move to Azerbaijan, Nasiri admitted the decision was driven by frustration. "I was deeply disappointed after missing out on the Tokyo Olympics. Joining the Azerbaijani team was a way to pursue my personal goals, although it was certainly not an easy choice," said Nasiri, who was also part of Iran's quadruple sculls crew that won Asian gold in 2017.

Asked whether his objectives were achieved during his time with Azerbaijan, Nasiri said they were partially fulfilled. "I was able to compete in more international events that had previously been out of reach. With a higher-level coach, better facilities and more frequent international

travel, I made significant progress," he said.

Although he did not compete at the World Championships, Nasiri said he took part in several high-profile European regattas and posted respectable results.

"It's a special feeling to be back with the Iranian team. This flag is always worth fighting for," he said. "I intend to continue working with the same coach I had in Azerbaijan, but within the Iranian national team. I want my progress and results to come here."

Looking ahead, Nasiri said international regulations mean he must wait until the start of the 2026 season to compete under the Iranian flag again.

"I am currently training in Iran with a Russian coach to prepare for the Asian Games. My times have improved significantly in recent years, and I'm aiming for a strong performance in Nagoya," he said.

"It will still be a tough challenge, and I can't afford to miss any training sessions. I'll also need to compete in several events along the way," Nasiri added.

Nasiri eyes Asian Games glory after rejoining Iranian rowing team



● DETLEV SEYB/WORLD ROWING

Iran makes bid to host 2028 Asian Weightlifting Championships



● IWF

Sports Desk

Iran has submitted a bid to host the 2028 Asian Weightlifting Championships, Sajjad Anoushiravani, chairman of the Iranian Weightlifting Federation, announced on Wednesday.

The tournament will serve as a qualification event for the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games.

Iran has previously hosted the Asian Championships on six occasions, most recently in 1993, when Tabriz staged a men-only edition of the event.

Anoushiravani said Mohammed Jalood, the Iraqi president of the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF), has already pledged his support for Iran's bid. The proposal will now be reviewed at a meeting of the Asian Weightlifting Federation's Executive Board, to be held on the sidelines of the 2026 Asian

Senior Championships.

"I have discussed the bid with Mr. Jalood and Iran's Sports Minister, Mr. [Ahmad] Donyamali," said Anoushiravani, the 2012 Olympic silver medalist. "I will travel to the Asian Confederation's headquarters in Doha in the coming days for further consultations on hosting the event. After that, the final decision will rest with the IWF Executive Board."

Asked whether the annual International Fajr Cup in Tehran could serve as an Olympic qualifying event if Iran fails to secure hosting rights for the Asian Championships, Anoushiravani said it would not be possible.

"When the Fajr Cup previously served as an Olympic qualifier, the IWF selected qualifying events on a year-by-year basis," he said. "The International Olympic Committee has now established a fixed qualification pathway,

consisting of three World Championships, two Continental Championships and five Grand Prix events. The Fajr Cup is not included in the official Grand Prix calendar."

Under former Olympic champion Behdad Salimi, a rejuvenated Iranian team was represented by three weightlifters at May's Asian Championships in Jiangshan, China, winning a total of eight medals across two men's weight categories.

In the 96kg class, Alireza Moeini and Ali A'alipour claimed an all-Iranian one-two in the snatch, before A'alipour went on to secure gold in the clean and jerk and the total. Moeini added a bronze medal in the total.

In the +109kg category, Ayat Sharifi won silver in the snatch before producing a stronger showing in the clean and jerk to claim double golds in the lift and the overall total.